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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF INTOLERANCE AND OF DISCRIMINATION BASED ON RELIGION OR BELIEF

Written statement submitted by Fraternité Notre Dame, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[24 February 1998]

GE.98-10857 (E)

Elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief

1. While every individual has a right to open up fully and play a role in society, any religious idea must be acknowledged without any taking sides, and must be considered in a spirit of tolerance. Fraternité Notre Dame puts a special emphasis on the right of any person of any religion to practise freely his cult and perform his religious activities without being hindered, as long as those practices do not infringe on society in a negative fashion.

2. Fraternité Notre Dame too often experienced for itself pressures, or even threats and ill-treatment on the part of religious authorities noticeably different from its own, and which, being superior both in number and power, have used discrimination against Fraternité Notre Dame, to the point of wanting to make it disappear. This quite out of place and severe discrimination and intolerance originated in the fear to be exposed to competition in a way, on the ground of faith, and to be supplanted by a new religious congregation. Religious minorities, however, do not constitute a danger, especially when they are moved, like it has always been the case with Fraternité Notre Dame, by a spirit of peace and reconciliation, compassion and mutual comprehension.

3. That is why, we state here that the right to practise one's own religion cannot be denied to people, and that this right apply to individuals as much as groups and religious communities. Fraternité Notre Dame appeals to the Declaration on Human Rights so that any discrimination based on religion or religious belief be brought to an end.

4. In a particular society, spirituality and religious belief are essential factors which allow individuals to open up. Though it is invisible, religious feeling is one of the motors that raises a society above itself, takes it out of the materialism into which it quite often sinks, and fills it with hope and a reason in life, when poverty and misery squeeze it from all sides.

5. We assert this right of any person, even belonging to a religious minority, to express himself freely in peace, for the greatest benefit of every society.